AN

ATTEMPT

TO RESTORE THE

PRIMITIVE NATURAL CONSTITUTION

OF

MANKIND,

AND TO INCREASE

CONJUGAL PROCREATION.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

GOUT,

TOGETHER WITH THE

Correſpondence between Mr. HAWES and the Author relative to the Interment of the Dead;

The Author's principal Remarks on that Subject having been omitted in the Pamphlet lately publiſhed by the former Gentleman.

INSCRIBED TO DR. CADOGAN.

BY W. RENWICK, SURGEON.

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TO

DOCTOR CADOGAN.

SIR,

THE advantages derived from the labors of authoriſm have not been found to conſiſt in that extenſion of matter which frequently conduces to ſtupify inſtead of inſtructing the reader. It had, perhaps, been better had there been fewer of thoſe voluminous writers in the world whoſe bewildering prolixneſs has ſo great a tendency to weary and diſguſt, and in which there are generally to be found more weeds than flowers.

Theſe introductory remarks are not meant to favor the ſubſequent pages, but to juſtify thoſe

thoſe of your own pen.—The *rationality* and *conciſeneſs* of the few ingenious performances with which you have obliged the Public, and to which it would be happy for mankind to give the attention they deſerve, have induced me to take that liberty in which I have no other view than to acknowledge the pleaſure and edification I have received from the peruſal of ſuch agreeable compoſitions.

I am, Sir, with due reſpect,

Your very humble ſervant,

London,
July 2, 1778.

W. RENWICK.

AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THE PRIMITIVE NATURAL CONSTITUTION OF MANKIND, &c.

THAT the preſent race of mankind, in this country, are ſtrangers to that vigour of conſtitution which appears to have been ſo happily poſſeſſed by our anceſtors in former ages, is generally acknowledged; nor is it leſs true that this degeneracy increaſes with every ſucceeding generation.—There are few people of opulence who do not fall under the denomination of *valetudinarians*; conſumptive or other chronical diſeaſes continuing to enfeeble their natural

powers from the earlieſt maturity of life. Hence the want of children ſo univerſally complained of by thoſe who are moſt able to provide for them.—While many are altogether defective with reſpect to the propagation of their ſpecies, others engender a puny offspring to combat with the miſeries of conſtitutional diſtemperature, and in whoſe early exits they are ſo often deprived of heirs to thoſe eſtates which, in conſequence, frequently devolve on the moſt remote branches of relationſhip; and even *thoſe* are not always found living to prevent that extinction of title which ſometimes occurs.

Nor is parental malady *alone* productive of ſuch calamities. Much depends on the proper nurſing of children with regard to amending the debility of nature at the time of the birth.—It is in the period of infancy that the formation of a good conſtitution is to be effected. Yet ſuch is the infatuation of parents and of thoſe intruſted with ſo important a charge, that end is totally reverſed by an early recourſe to medicine, and other irregular proceedings.—No ſooner has an infant begun to breathe than its tender ſtomach is diſordered with ſome indigeſtible compoſition. Hence proceed flatulencies, which induce the uſe of ardent ſpirits and inflammatory carminatives. By ſuch treatment the humours ſoon become vitiated; and, from their acrimonious irritation, convulſive

ſpaſms,

ſpaſms, or cutaneous eruptions, naturally ſupervene.

The family-apothecary is now called in; whoſe preſcriptions counteracting, perhaps, the efforts of nature to exclude the morbid particles by a ſalutary tranſudation, occaſion that interruption and retroceſſion by which ſome of the vital functions are ſo much injured as either to prove ſpeedily fatal, or lay the foundation of thoſe diſorders which continue throughout the period of a lingering life.—As the patient advances in years, if but a ſingle pimple at any time happens to appear, a medicinal regimen is conceived to be neceſſary, as alſo at certain periods of annual rotation; till, from the relaxation of the ſolids, and reſolution of the fluids, that conſtitutional debilitude is confirmed which is never afterwards to be removed, and from whence originate the numerous train of nervous complaints found ſo univerſally prevalent and incurable. Theſe are ſtill more aggravated by the manner in which fevers of that denomination are generally treated. Even the late learned Dr. Huxham appears to have written as manifeſtly erroneous, in his celebrated Eſſays, as it has been ſuppoſed in the writer's correſpondence with Mr. Hawes, the immortal Dr. Mead, had done in his elaborate Treatiſe on the Plague.

The former very gravely tells us that he never found his patients of the above claſs *ſo eaſy* as when they were perſpiring—without ſeeming to be ſenſible that the medicines he uſually preſcribed for this purpoſe were what are called Venice Treacle and Paregorick Elixir; in both whereof the prevailing ingredient is *opium*; than which (however it may produce *a ſuſpenſion of pain*) nothing can prove more obnoxious to the nerves, or that elaſtic fluid by which the ſeveral functions of the animal œconomy are performed.—The former compoſition is moreover of that nature as to render the retention of it in any public diſpenſatory at this period of time, an evident reproach to the ſcience of phyſic. This is one of thoſe errors alluded to in the above-mentioned correſpondence which the deluſions of antiquity have impoſed on mankind. Yet it is common with our moſt eminent modern writers to defy the inveſtigations of criticiſm with reſpect to ſentiments, as well as practice, that are proved to coincide with the writings of the *antients*; which is ſuppoſing that the firſt medical authors were *infallible*, and that whoever differs from them muſt be wrong, notwithſtanding the intervention of two thouſand years. Hence the repeated quotations from *Hippocrates* and his earlieſt ſucceſſors; though the diſplay of erudition is perhaps the moſt actuating motive in this view.

What

What appears the more extraordinary with reſpect to Dr. Huxham is, that, in another place, he *interdicts* the uſe of *opiates* in the fevers that have been mentioned, yet immediately follows ſuch interdiction with a recommendation of the before-mentioned compoſitions. "Opiates," ſays he, "are commonly" (he might have ſaid *always*) "very pernicious. Small quantities of "*theriaca andromachi* or *elixir paregoricum* will "have much better effects."—Were it not that the author of this quotation is Dr. *Huxham*, one might venture to ſay he muſt have been unacquainted with the compounding ingredients. The inconſiſtency, however, is not therefore the leſs obvious.—Certain it is, that opium, even in the *ſmalleſt* quantity, can by no means be a favourable medicine in thoſe maladies where relaxation and imbecility conſtitute the diſeaſe; eſpecially with reſpect to what are called the *primæ viæ*, or firſt paſſages.—That compoſitions containing ſuch an ingredient will ſupply a *temporary relief*, cannot be denied; but while that relief is obtained at the expence of protracting the diſeaſe, and rendering the patient more languid than ever after the ceſſation of its cordial influence, it can never be juſtified on the principles of reaſon. As the writer, however, is not unmindful of his being *himſelf* ſubject to the errors of human nature, he begs pardon for what he has advanced, ſhould any ſuperior pen be able

to

to vindicate the propriety of what now appears to him ſo manifeſtly injudicious; nor has he conceived that the authors he has attacked being two of the greateſt that the preſent or any other century has produced, or their having never been called in queſtion before, were ſufficient reaſons for his declining to make that inquiry whereon depends the improvement of the art on which they have written.

To return to thoſe conſiderations intended to remedy the evils antecedently noticed, and to reſtore that ſtate of health and activity which once but ſeldom required the aſſiſtance of phyſic, the ſubſequent advice is recommended to the attention of thoſe whom it may concern, and which it is conceived will greatly conduce to remove the cauſes of ſterility.

Nothing can be more wicked than the publication of *ſtimulating medicines* for the purpoſes of procreation, nor more abſurd than a compliance with the uſe of them. However ſuch artificial incentives may excite a ſenſual propenſity by their inflammatory irritation, they can never produce that natural impulſe neceſſary for the formation of a healthy fœtus. The exigencies of the ſtate, with reſpect to public revenue, muſt be ſupplied; but humanity and other conſiderations ſhould interdict the obtaining them by the

the permiſſion of recourſes which not only tend to injure the health, but to deprave the morals, by a wanton and indiſcriminate uſe of them;— nor can the feeling mind forbear to lament the number of *valetudinarians* occaſioned by authoriſed quackery for the cure of that unhappy diſeaſe incident to the licentious votaries of Venus.

It is ſeldom, perhaps, that conception immediately ſupervenes the nuptial conſummation. We will not, therefore, procraſtinate that completion by preſcribing a preparatory regimen.— If, however, no ſymptoms of pregnancy are perceptible in a few months after, it will be adviſeable that amorous intercourſe (which requires nocturnal ſeparation) ſhould be ſuſpended for a longer or ſhorter period, as circumſtances may be found to indicate.

In the mean time, each party ſhould live temperately, on wholeſome *ſolid* aliment; uſe moderate exerciſe, and obſerve a regularity with regard to the hours aſſigned to natural reſt. Whatever has a tendency to vitiate the fluids, or diſpoſe the ſolids to relaxation, will manifeſtly prevent fœcundity. — Though a *milk* diet being in its nature the moſt ſalutary, is the moſt powerful corrector of depraved humours,

thoſe

thoſe who find it to diſagree with their ſtomachs, may continue in a moderate indulgence of *plain* animal food, with a reſtricted uſe of wine and water.—As the writer is inclined to think that his *own* ſex have moſt occaſion to attend to theſe curſory obſervations, it is hoped they will regard them with that ſincerity they may appear to deſerve.

During the period of pregnancy, let the preceding regulations (conjugal intercourſe is not altogether prohibited) continue to be obſerved on the part of the female; and let it be the buſineſs of her huſband to maintain that mental ſerenity ſo eſſentially conducive to the preſervation of both her own health and that of the fœtus.—After delivery, let the mother be ſuffered to recover by thoſe means which are the moſt favourable to nature; and the child have no other phyſic than what flows from the mother's breaſt, (who muſt be careful of her diet) unleſs particular circumſtances indicate a neceſſary deviation. If the ſtate of her conſtitution will admit of it, it will be moſt prudent for her to continue to ſuckle it for ſome months; if otherwiſe, it will be beſt to commit it to the care of a foreign nurſe, ſufficiently healthy, and always under inſpection. The obſervations made by the writer ſometime ago relative to

Godfrey's

Godfrey's Cordial, will dictate this neceſſary ſuperintendency *.

For three or four years let its food be chiefly milk and bread. (*Broth*, though generally recommended, is deemed too relaxing; relaxation being a natural cauſe of many diſorders incident to children). A little animal diet may then be ſparingly allowed, and gradually increaſed as it approximates towards maturity.—Let ſlight maladies be left for nature to remove, aſſiſted by any ſimple treatment †.—Above all, let that *exerciſe* and *freſh air* be conſtantly ſupplied which, in every period of life, have the greateſt tendency to prevent indiſpoſition, and promote longevity.

* The moſt favourable period for inoculation (which, however uſeful, is continuing a diſorder that might otherwiſe be exterminated) is while the child is ſucking, and before the approach of dentition; the channels of perſpiration more eaſily admitting the neceſſary expulſion than when, from riper age, the fibres become more rigid.

† Moſt of the diſeaſes of children are occaſioned by acrimonious humours in the ſtomach and bowels; for the removal of which, nothing is ſo efficacious as gentle laxatives that have no tendency to irritate.

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS ON THE GOUT.

THAT grand and capital diſorder (the conſequence of intemperance and inactivity) which has ſo often reminded Monarchs and great men of the frailty of human nature, and that there is no perfect happineſs on this ſide of the grave,—that diſorder (the *Gout*) which has employed the pens of ſo many learned writers, and proved the ſubject of ſo much altercation, is certainly a diſeaſe leſs difficult to be removed and prevented than it has generally been deemed to be; being no more than a ſalutary effort of Nature to free herſelf from the accumulation of noxious humours, by tranſlating them to the extremities; where, like any other ſpecies of acrimonious matter, they vellicate and corrode the ſurrounding membrances, till they are ripe enough to tranſpire: at which time, being

being *leſs irritable*, the inflammation decreaſes, and the ſubſequent relaxation of the fibres favours the expulſion.—Where the malady is often renewed, the ligaments ſubſervient to motion become ſo much injured by the corroſive tendency of the acrid ſtagnation, that they loſe the power of action; and hence ariſes that ſtiffneſs of the joints which enſues. This appears to be a more probable cauſe of ſuch a defect than the *concretions* aſſigned by Dr. Mead.

With reſpect to the cure, which requires a ſtrict attention to temperance and wholeſome nutriment—whatever has a tendency to accelerate the neceſſary tranſpiration, muſt naturally be the moſt favourable preſcription.—As this critical diſcharge cannot be effected without the antecedent decreaſe of the *inflammatory conſtriction*, thoſe evacuations may occaſionally be neceſſary which in the ſmall-pox are now found to *forward* inſtead of *reſtraining* the eruption; the cutaneous pores being thereby opened to admit of the excretion that terminates the diſeaſe. This indicates the moſt ſalutary manner of treating every ſpecies of general and local inflammation, and manifeſts the obnoxious influence of thoſe medicines in common fevers which naturally tend to renew or continue the inflammatory ſtimulus that occaſions the febrile ſtruggle.

Whatever diſorders the *primæ viæ*, or firſt paſſages, (which in chronical diſtempers are naturally vitiated, and from whence the gout is *originally derived)* muſt of conſequence protract the diſeaſe. The leſs medicine therefore taken internally, the better; ſince, whatever may be the conceived properties of a preſcription before it is received into the ſtomach, it may there aſſume qualities of a very different nature.—The moſt wholeſome *aliment*, may, by indigeſtion, be rendered of a poiſonous nature. This is ſometimes found to be the caſe with that pureſt of all kinds of nutriment, *milk*.—The grand point is to enable Nature to make the neceſſary tranſlation (which is not to be ſafely effected by inflammatory cordials), and then to facilitate the progreſs of the reſolution and diſcharge of the peccant humour.

Muſk and *Caſtor*, recommended by a late writer, appear to exert their effects by acting as ſudorifics and antiſpaſmodics;—*Volatile Tincture of Guaicum*, introduced by another, as a ſudorific and reſolvent: but the latter given in the quantity preſcribed, will have a tendency to *inflame* ſome conſtitutions, and thereby fruſtrate the preſcriber's intention.—Whoever, therefore, is ſo imprudent as to recommend the ſame medicine to every patient labouring under the ſame diſeaſe, is manifeſtly either a *fool*, or an *impoſter*.

TO

TO THE

MEMBERS

OF THE

HUMANE SOCIETY

FOR THE

RECOVERY OF PERSONS

APPARENTLY DEAD BY DROWNING.

GENTLEMEN,

WHILE every humane perſon will be ready to applaud the happy inſtitution you are formed to ſupport, you cannot be inſenſible that, under the idea of benefitting the community, thoſe innovations have at different periods been introduced which fatal experience has proved to be founded in deluſion, and pregnant with conſequences in which, however favourable in a *particular point of view*, certain evil *preponderated*.

As the doctrine which gave occaſion to the ſubſequent correſpondence is of the moſt alarming

ing nature, and could ſcarcely fail, if generally adopted, to prove more injurious than the loſs of kingdoms or national bankruptcy, the writer reſpectfully begs leave to recommend the ſame to your ſerious conſideration; leſt you might at any time be prevailed on to ſupply that ſanction which would be likely to render it frequently as dangerous to reſide in London as it is ſometimes found to be at Conſtantinople.

It is ſufficiently known to thoſe converſant in the hiſtory of diſeaſes, that peſtilential diſtempers naturally enſue from a vitiated ſtate of the common atmoſphere; and whether waiting *ten days* (the number we have been told that will generally be requiſite) for the re-animation of dead bodies in *general* would have a tendency to produce ſuch contamination, I ſhall leave your own ideas to determine. Certain it is, that the contagion of *diſeaſe* increaſes with the approximation of the humours towards putrefaction; and that the infection of a ſingle family would be liable to infect the community at large.

We have been told of people ſeized with fits, or rendered ſuddenly indiſpoſed, who have recovered within a *few hours* after the apparent ceſſation of life; but this by no means proves the neceſſity of keeping even *thoſe* out of the coffin for *ten days*: nor has it perhaps ever been proved

proved that a recovery was effected after the elapſement of twenty-four hours.—With reſpect to febrile and other maladies, the putreſcency of the animal fluids often precede the death of the patient, and noxious effluvia generally tranſpire in leſs than *three* days after vital extinction.

I am, with reſpectful deference,

Gentlemen,

Your moſt obedient ſervant,

W. RENWICK.

AN

AN ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC*.

THE cuſtom of laying out the bodies of perſons ſuppoſed to be dead, as ſoon as reſpiration ceaſes, and *the interment of them before the ſigns of putrefaction appear*, has been frequently oppoſed by men of learning and humanity in this and other countries. Monſ. Bruhier, in particular, a phyſician of great eminence in Paris, publiſhed a piece about thirty years ago, in which he clearly proved that many perſons who have been buried alive, and were providentially diſcovered in that ſtate, had been reſcued from the grave, and enjoyed the pleaſures of ſociety for ſeveral years after.

But notwithſtanding the numerous and well-authenticated facts of this kind, the cuſtom

* It has only been thought neceſſary to inſert ſuch parts of this Addreſs as are referred to in the ſubſequent Reply.

above-

above-mentioned remains in full force.—I am willing, however, to hope, that ſince it has of late been ſo frequently demonſtrated, that the vital principle may exiſt where the characteriſtics of death, except *putrefaction*, are preſent, the rational part of the community are at length diſpoſed to pay ſome attention to this ſubject.

I ſhould think myſelf extremely culpable if I neglected to caution parents and nurſes againſt the free uſe of GODFREY'S CORDIAL. It is a ſtrong ſolution of *Opium*, and I am perſuaded that the ſleep it produces has proved the *ſleep of death* to thouſands of children.

Palſgrave-Place,
Sept. 5. W. HAWES.

TO THE PUBLIC.

IN REPLY TO THE ADDRESS SIGNED W. HAWES.

OPINIONS founded in error, where they have a tendency to affect the public welfare, cannot be too early refuted. The ſubſequent curſory remarks are left to be enlarged on by thoſe whoſe abilities and ſituation are more favourable for ſuch a diſcuſſion.

The general addreſs relative to the protraction recommended in burying the dead, is by far of a more alarming nature than any thing that has hitherto tranſpired reſpecting our martial operations on the other ſide of the Atlantic. Dreadful might be the reſult, ſhould ſuch advice be univerſally adhered to. Diſeaſe has ever proved more fatal than the weapons of art; and the adoption of the ſentiments alluded to, would be to produce a general peſtilence.

The author inſinuates that the dead ſhould not be interred, or rather that they ſhould not even be *prepared* for that intention, till ſigns of external

external *putrefaction* appear, which often may not happen till ſeveral days after the internal corruption of the viſcera. The impropriety of ſuch advice muſt be obvious to every one who conſiders the obnoxious influence of reſpired air impregnated with the contaminating effluvia of mortified bodies. Whether the extended atmoſphere became generally infected, or ſuch infection was confined to the reſpective dwellings where the dead were ſuffered to corrupt, thoſe malignant maladies could ſcarcely fail to ſupervene which would in time become univerſally contagious. This has been often experienced in military campaigns, where the putrid exhalations from corpſes not ſpeedily buried, have generated that epidemical indiſpoſition which has proved more deſtructive than all the other devaſtations of war. If then the health of the living ſo eſſentially depends on the *purity of the element we breathe*, and without which we cannot exiſt, it is manifeſtly evident that a compliance with the propoſition above-mentioned, would be attended with conſequences diametrically oppoſite to its expreſſed intention; if a propoſal may be deemed inſalutary which, with an *uncertain* view of extending the life of a *ſingle individual*, would have a *certain* tendency to endanger the lives of *thouſands*.—That the apprehenſions of the addreſſer may not be altogether without foundation, is not denied; but it is by

no means warrantable or judicious to attempt to remove a leſſer evil at the expence of a greater. That gentleman will therefore excuſe the writer for adding, in oppoſition to his own anticipated ſatisfaction from the reverſe, that he will think himſelf happy, ſhould the preceding animadverſions be found to have contributed to render his propoſed innovation abortive, notwithſtanding the writer's equal diſinclination to be buried *durante vita.*

With reſpect to the cuſtomary offices that ſucceed the apparent diſcontinuance of reſpiration, it would certainly be right not to expoſe the body to the external air for a few hours after, or till the ſeveral parts are cold enough to produce that rigidity which, though not always, is generally a certain indication of the vital extinction; or at leaſt, not to be *over-haſty* in the ceremonies of ſuch a department.—It would alſo be prudent for the friends and relatives of the deceaſed to refrain from the unavailable cuſtom with many of taking their farewell of the dead by a labial ſalutation before the coffin is cloſed; nor ſhould any one be longer or oftner in the apartment where the corpſe is laid, after there has been time for the fluids and abdominal viſcera to corrupt, than there is occaſion for.

The ſtrictures on GODFREY'S CORDIAL with which Mr. Hawes concludes his addreſs, are manifeſtly

manifeſtly pertinent, and merit the moſt ſerious attention, not only of the public in general, but of the Legiſlature in particular, with reſpect to the interdiction of the ſale of a medicine which muſt often not only prove mortally deleterious, but enfeeble the conſtitutions of thoſe children who ſurvive its pernicious influence; from whence proceed the diſeaſes of maturer age, and the generation of weakly progenies.—This is certainly a public grievance that cannot be too early redreſſed, and in which the greateſt vigilance may not prove ſufficient to prevent the firſt families in the kingdom from being domeſtically intereſted.

Berwick-upon-Tweed,
Sept. 12, 1777. W. RENWICK.

To

To Mr. RENWICK, of Berwick upon Tweed.

SIR,

AS you have, in a very liberal and gentlemanlike manner, propoſed an objection to *one* of the cautions contained in my addreſs, concerning the dangerous cuſtom of laying out perſons as ſoon as apparently dead, or, in other words, as ſoon as reſpiration ceaſes; I think it a duty I owe both to you and the public, to ſtate my reaſons for thinking that objection of no force.

I am happy to find that you perfectly agree with me in my leading principle, the impropriety of laying out perſons immediately upon the appearance of death. "With reſpect to the "cuſtomary offices that ſucceed the apparent "diſcontinuance of reſpiration, it would certain-"ly be right," you obſerve, "not to expoſe the "body to the external air for a few hours after, "or till the ſeveral parts are cold enough to "produce that rigidity which, though not al-"ways, is generally a certain indication of the "vital extinction; or, at leaſt, not to be *over-*"*haſty* in the ceremonies of ſuch a department." Theſe, Sir, are your own words; and I have read them with pleaſure, becauſe they confirm the

the *propriety* of my principal caution, and will, I hope, efficaciouſly co-operate with it in aboliſhing the inhuman cuſtom above-mentioned.

Your objection to my other caution, reſpecting the *interment* of bodies, ſeems, in a great meaſure, to be founded on a miſconception of my meaning. "The author of the addreſs," you ſay, "inſinuates that the dead ſhould not "be interred, or rather, that they ſhould not be "*prepared* for that intention, till ſigns of ex-"ternal putrefaction appear." Permit me, Sir, to cite the paſſages which more immediately relate to interment, and you will perceive, upon reading them again, that I have not thrown out the inſinuation which you have *haſtily* imputed to me *.

But admitting I had inſinuated that the dead ſhould not be *prepared* for interment till ſigns of external putrefaction appear, I think that even *then* your dreadful apprehenſions would have been entirely groundleſs. The ſigns of putrefaction, in the firſt ſtage of that proceſs, and which are deciſive indications of death, are not accompanied with fœtor, and conſequently no miſchief, from your own principle, can poſſibly ariſe in waiting for their appearance. In the

* The miſtake being *acknowledged*, the *repeated* paſſages alluded to are here omitted.

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ſecond ſtage, indeed, a fœtid and injurious vapor ariſes; but unleſs the maſs of putrifying matter be very conſiderable, as has ſometimes been the caſe after battles, &c. when the ſlain have been let unburied, that vapor is in a very ſhort time combined with the air, and intirely diſarmed of its danger. If this were not the caſe, the air of London, from the quantity of animal and vegetable matter continually putrifying in the ſtreets, &c. would very ſoon become intolerably offenſive, and altogether unfit for the purpoſes of reſpiration.

But "the ſigns of *external* putrefaction," you ſay, "may not happen till ſeveral days after the *internal* corruption of the viſcera." Be it ſo, Sir; it furniſhes no objection to the rule I have recommended: for if the abdominal viſcera corrupt, and no putrid vapor eſcapes, the air cannot be "impregnated with contaminating efflu-"via." If putrid vapor ſhould eſcape in any conſiderable quantity, it is a *ſign* that putrefaction has taken place, and that the body may ſafely be interred. In general, however, a putrid diſcoloration of ſome parts of the body, particularly the abdomen, precedes the exhalation of any noxious vapor, as is well known to thoſe who are converſant in diſſections. But the time which may elapſe before this diſcoloration appears, is very uncertain; as it depends on the

nature

nature of the diſeaſe which terminated life, the heat of the weather, and various other cauſes.

To conclude, I wiſh it were deeply impreſſed upon the mind of every individual, that the only unequivocal ſigns of death are the marks of putrefaction, and that thoſe who are committed to the earth before theſe marks are diſcovered, may poſſibly be buried alive.

Having thus, in juſtice to the public, to you, and myſelf, given this explanation of my caution, relating to the interment of the dead, and vindicated the propriety of it againſt the objection to which, in your opinion, it was liable, I ſhall beg leave, *on my part*, to put an end to the diſpute. Controverſy is not agreeable to me; and if it were, the duties of my profeſſion, and other increaſing cares, would not permit me to proſecute it.

I am, Sir, with due reſpect,

your very humble ſervant,

Palſgrave-Place,
Oct. 1.

W. HAWES.

To Mr. HAWES, of Palſgrave-Place, London.

SIR,

IN times of antiquity, before men began to apply themſelves to ſpeculation, and to contraſt the ſuppoſed advantages of any propoſition with its apparent inconveniencies, thoſe erroneous inſtitutions became authoriſed which the diſcrimination of ſucceeding ages has not been able wholly to remove. This proves the neceſſity of demonſtrating the fallacious tendency of any ſuggeſtion by which the public welfare may be injured, before cuſtom has ſtamped it with an indelible ſanction.

Theſe, Sir, were the prevailing conſiderations which induced the writer to animadvert on your Addreſs to the Public, reprehending the practice of burying the dead before they appear to be in a ſtate of *putrefaction*. The ſtrain of your reply to ſuch animadverſions diſplays that candor and moderation in controverſy which, though not certain characteriſtics, are the natural concomitants of good ſenſe and a liberal diſpoſition. It is not, therefore, without reluctance that the importance of the ſubject has conſtrained me to reſume

reſume the pen, with a view to make thoſe obſervations, in anſwer to ſuch replication, in which, as they are intended for the public eye, I ſhall be more enlarged than if they were confined to your own private inſpection; and which, to *give you no farther trouble*, are the laſt I mean to ſupply.

With reſpect to the *parentheſis* in the following quotation, that you had inſinuated "the dead ſhould not be interred (or rather that they ſhould not be *prepared* for that intention) till ſigns of putrefaction appear," I have to aſk your pardon for that *erroneous paſſage*—occaſioned by my not being poſſeſſed of your addreſs when I alluded thereto. You have been pleaſed, however, to ſignify, that though you did not yourſelf *introduce* ſuch a paſſage, it was *no miſrepreſentation of your ſentiments*. For "admitting" (you ſay) "I had inſinuated that the dead ſhould "not be *prepared* for interment till ſigns of pu-"trefaction appear, I think that even then your "dreadful apprehenſions would be *entirely* "*groundleſs*.—The ſigns of putrefaction, in the "firſt ſtage of that proceſs, and which are deci-"ſive indications of death, are not accompanied "with *fætor*, and conſequently no miſchief from "your own principle can poſſibly ariſe in wait-"ing for their appearance."—

I muſt confeſs I am ſo far from being of this opinion, that I am perſuaded contagious effluvia may tranſpire without being *ſenſibly offenſive*. The *lungs* often putrify before the abdominal viſcera. From *theſe*, and the *fermenting humours in the ſtomach*, the moſt active particles may imperceptibly evaporate before the deciſive indications you mention are aſcertained; the fluids in a human ſubject being of a more acrimonious and powerful nature than thoſe of other creatures not accuſtomed to animal nouriſhment. On the other hand, to thoſe whoſe organs are very ſuſceptible, a cadaverous ſmell is generally apparent even in the *firſt* ſtage of putrefaction, eſpecially where the diſeaſe of the deceaſed was of a putrid nature;—by thoſe of leſs perceptibility, no deciſive fœtor may happen to be felt till putrefaction is ſo far advanced as to expoſe the attendants on the funeral to the greateſt danger, but more particularly thoſe whoſe province it is to prepare for that awful ſolemnity.

"In the ſecond ſtage indeed" (you proceed) "a fœtid and injurious vapour ariſes; but unleſs the maſs of putrifying matter be very conſiderable, as has ſometimes been the caſe after battles, &c. when the ſlain have been left unburied, that vapour is in a very ſhort time (*in which ſpace of time infection may be caught*) combined with the air, and intirely diſarmed

"of

"of its danger. If this were not the caſe, the "air of London, from the quantity of animal "and vegetable matter putrifying in the ſtreets, "&c. would very ſoon become intollerably of- "fenſive, and altogether unfit for the purpoſes "of reſpiration."—

Permit me to obſerve, it is by no means diſproving a thing to be *injurious* becauſe it is not *altogether* ſo. The element we breathe may be ſo far vitiated as to prove very obnoxious to the animal œconomy without cauſing the immediate ceſſation of vital action; nor though the particles of infection may not be ſufficient to occaſion that fermentation in the blood neceſſary to produce *a fever*, the animal humours may be ſo far corrupted as to engender ſome *chronical* diſeaſe. Hence, the inhabitants of large towns, and thoſe whoſe occupations are *unfavourable* to reſpiration, generally die of conſumptions and other lingering maladies.—That the air of London, like all other great commercial cities, is *always impure*, and *injurious to health*, has ever been a general received opinion, founded on reaſon and obvious demonſtration; nor, in the apartment containing a dead body beginning to putrify, do we ever find any ceſſation (becauſe it is *always tranſpiring*) of the "fœtid and *injurious* vapour" you mention before the removal of the corpſe; and it may be remarked, that one or more of the

the family where ſuch fœtor prevails, are frequently ſeized with the diſeaſe of the deceaſed, or ſome other malignant diſtemper. Whatever too may be the ſalutary influence of the ſuppoſed combination in a fluctuating ſtate of the open atmoſphere, ſuch influence cannot be ſo ſpeedily or effectually produced where there is but a ſmall portion of that element, diſpoſſeſſed perhaps of its natural elaſticity from other cauſes, and the want of unattainable ventilation. In this view, may not the effluvia from a ſingle carcaſe in ſuch a *confined ſituation* prove as obnoxious as that ariſing from a thouſand dead bodies on an extended plain, open to the influence of the general atmoſphere?—the "maſs of putri-"fying matter" being not leſs conſiderable, with reſpect to the comparative quantity and quality of the combining fluid. Nor, ſince the air, like the ocean, is only purified by agitation, can the moſt perfect conceived incorporation, in a ſtagnated ſtate of that element, render that vapour which you acknowledge to be injurious for *a time* (and in which time I have ſaid infection may be received) "intirely diſarmed of its dan-"ger."—Blending a ſmaller quantity of corrupted water with a larger quantity of good (admitting the purity of the combining air before alluded to) may take off the *ungrateful ſmell* of the former, but the mixture will not thereby be rendered *wholeſome drink*. On the other hand, if

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the common air happens to be naturally impure, or otherwiſe contaminated, its union with morbid exhalations will render the particles of contagion the more active and durable, and the farther extend their peſtilential influence.

My having aſſerted that the ſigns of *external putrefaction* may not happen till ſeveral days after *internal corruption* "furniſhes no objection," you ſay, "to the rule you have recommended: "for if the abdominal viſcera corrupt, and *no* "*putrid vapour eſcapes*, the air cannot be im- "pregnated with contaminating effluvia." Granted.—"If putrid vapour ſhould eſcape in "any *conſiderable quantity*, it is a ſign that pu- "trefaction has *taken place*, and that the body "may be ſafely interred." But ſuppoſe ſuch *corruptible* indication of *corruption* occurs too late at night to admit of convenient interment till the next day, what injurious progreſs may not the putrefaction make in the courſe of ſixteen or twenty hours during a warm ſtate of the atmoſphere, eſpecially where the diſeaſe has been of a putrid nature? That this would frequently happen is naturally to be expected.

With reſpect to the putrid diſcoloration of *ſome* part of the body which you mention as generally antecedent to "the exhalation of any "noxious vapour," unleſs *every* part of the corpſe

corpſe be *frequently* inſpected (which might prove fatal to the inſpector, eſpecially where the contagion of a fatal diſeaſe grew the ſtronger as the putreſcency advanced) this prognoſtic would not always be timely enough diſcovered to intercept the injurious conſequences liable to ſupervene. Nor, when once late burials became cuſtomary, is it unlikely that the fallacious hopes of re-animation, together with the dread of being accuſed with a too early interment of friends or relatives, would occaſion the dead to be generally kept till the *ſecond* ſtage of putrefaction, though every one (which cannot be ſuppoſed) was as capable to diſcern the firſt as the "*anatomiſts.*"—When, therefore, any general or epidemical diſorder happened to rage during the ſummer-ſeaſon, would not the effluvia from a *conſiderable number of rotten carcaſes*, or dead bodies in a ſtate of putrefaction, have a tendency to produce that malignant ſtate of the atmoſphere which might engender even the *plague itſelf*, as far as a northern climate will permit ſuch a ſpecies of diſtemperature to prevail? However this might happen to be, certain it is, that ſhould only *one family* become infected, the malady might prove of ſuch a nature as to infect the *community at large*: for though contagious diſeaſes not occaſioned by any malignancy in the common air, are at firſt only propagated by *perſonal intercourſe*, yet whenever the ſtate of the atmoſphere

atmoſphere is ſuch as to favour the diffuſion of the morbid effluvia with which it is charged, the malady ſpreads as far as the particles of ſuch infection are carried. From thence it is farther tranſmitted by the recent exhalations *generated in that quarter*, and thus continued with rapid progreſſion to every part of the kingdom, till a favourable conſtitution of the atmoſphere terminates the peſtilence.

If this inveſtigation of the continued diffuſion of contagious *miaſmata* be right, it proves Dr. MEAD to have written erroneouſly in *one* part of his elegant and deſcriptive diſſertation on the Plague. That learned author tells us that the air, however corrupted, is incapable of carrying infection to any great diſtance; as a proof of which he alludes to the limited circulation of *ſmoak*—which I cannot think anologous; being, I imagine, of a nature different from the active particles of *peſtilential vapour*. Hence the conceived impropriety of his repreſenting the greater *quantity* of the former as a confirmation of what he advances.—From the antecedent concluſion he conjectures, that when the winds have conveyed the infection to a certain diſtance from the place where the diſeaſe commenced, the further propagation of it can only be produced by traffic and ſocial communication. Whether he was abſolutely miſtaken with reſpect to ſuch

concluſion, I ſubmit to the determination of others.

I now, Sir, beg leave to ſignify that though I have differed from you in opinion relative to the particular ſubject of our correſpondence, I perfectly concur in every other part of your judicious advice; nor do I expect any thing I have advanced to be conſidered but as the ſentiments of an *individual*; leaving the public to determine as they ſhall think proper, and flattering myſelf you will not be offended at my having taken that liberty in which you have yourſelf preceded me.—I ſhall only add, that though I am ſenſible the idea of preventing *one* perſon from being buried before the laſt ſpark of life be extinguiſhed, will make a greater impreſſion on moſt minds than that of preventing *a thouſand* from the conſequences of general ſickneſs, I cannot forbear repeating that it is ſurely wrong to attempt to remove a leſſer evil at the expence of a greater; or hourly to indanger the health and lives of the community at large by waiting for that re-animation of individuals which might never happen to take place.—Of two calamities, where *one* muſt be ſuſtained, it has ever been deemed moſt rational to chuſe the leaſt; and that a remedy ſhould never be ſo prepared as to prove more fatal than the diſeaſe.—The ſtate of human nature is ſuch, that there are perhaps *no* cuſtoms

cuſtoms that might not be interdicted on account of *ſome* inconveniences. The beſt policy is therefore to adhere to thoſe which appear to be moſt generally advantageous.—The moſt deleterious noſtrum is ſometimes found to prove ſucceſsful where regular practice has failed, but this is no warrantable recommendation to a general uſe of it; and there can be but little rational humanity in an uncertain endeavour to reſtore a *ſingle life* at the certain hazard of *many lives*.

I am, with due reſpect,

Sir,

Your moſt humble ſervant,

Berwick-upon-Tweed,
Oct. 14, 1777. W. RENWICK.

P. S. From what has been obſerved in the courſe of the antecedent animadverſions, the impropriety of burying the dead in churches and church-yards ſituated in the midſt of cities and populous towns, muſt be manifeſtly apparent. It is therefore to be wiſhed that the Legiſlature would take the ſame into conſideration, and that writers of ability would join to enforce the aboliſhment of ſo impolitic a cuſtom.

FINIS.